

Message Text

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SUBJECT: PRE-ELECTION ROUND-UP: DECEMBER 14

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SUMMARY: THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN DURING THE PAST FOUR DAYS HAS PICKED UP SPEED. THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES HELD LARGE NATIONAL RALLIES ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12. THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY (IP) GATHERING ATTRACTED AN ESTIMATED 75,000, WHILE THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM) DREW ABOUT 30,000 SUPPORTERS. THE LABOR PARTY PUBLISHED ITS MANIFESTO, ADDING MORE PROMISES, SUCH AS 100 PERCENT HOUSING LOANS FOR PROSPECTIVE HOMEOWNERS AND A NATIONAL HEALTH SCHEME, DESIGNED TO WIN VOTES. MMM LEADER BERENGER ASKED HIS FOLLOWERS TO RAMAIN CALM AND PEACEFUL REGARDLESS OF THE ELECTORAL OUTCOME. RAM PYNDIAH, THE ERRATIC MMM RECRUIT, BEGAN TO CREATE TROUBLE FOR THE MMM WITH REVEALING STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS ABOUT DISSIDENCE WITHIN THE PARTY. PMSD LEADER DUVAL GAVE A VIRTUOSO TV PERFORMANCE AND CONTINUED TO THROW BARBS AT NOT ONLY THE IP AND MMM, BUT ALSO AT THE MAURITIAN DEMOCRATIC UNION (UDM), CALLING ON ITS CANDIDATES TO WITHDRAW IN FAVOR OF THE PMSD IN THE FACE OF AN ALLEGED SECRET ACCORD BETWEEN THE UDM AND THE MMM. INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN CONNECTION WITH SUNDAY'S LARGE PUBLIC RALLIES, AND THE POLICE BEGAN SEARCHING CARS FOR WEAPONS TO CURTAIL THE POSSIBILITY OF AN UPSWING IN VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 PORT L 01103 151017Z

1. THE CAMPAIGN, HEADING INTO ITS FINAL WEEK, PICKED UP SPEED OVER THE PAST WEEKEND. ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES, THE IP (INDEPENDENCE PARTY), THE MMM (MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT) AND THE PMSD (MAURITIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY), HELD NATIONAL RALLIES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. THE IP GATHERED A THRONG OF 75,000 (A POLICE ESTIMATE) IN PORT LOUIS. THE MMM RALLIED ITS FOLLOWERS IN ROSE HILL AND SUCCEEDED IN GETTING A CROWD OF ABOUT 30,000 PERSONS. HOLDING RALLIES IN TWO SEPARATE SOUTHERN TOWNS, THE PMSD WAS FAR LESS SUCCESSFUL IN ATTRACTING LOCAL CROWDS, ALTHOUGH ITS LEADER, GAETAN DUVAL, WAS MET AT THE AIRPORT ON HIS RETURN FROM CAMPAIGNING IN RODRIGUES BY A LARGE CROWD OF SYMPATHIZERS WHO HAD COME IN 800 PRIVATE CARS AND TRUCKS.

2. AT THE BIG RALLY OF THE IP IN PORT LOUIS, RAMGOOLAM WAS IN GOOD FORM THOUGH A BIT WILD. HE AGAIN DENIED CATEGORICALLY THAT THERE IS ANY UNDER-THE-TABLE AGREEMENT WITH THE PMSD. HE SAID THE MMM IS A "TROJAN HORSE" OF THE REACTIONARIES AND CAPITALISTS TO BRING DOWN THE LABOR GOVERNMENT. RAM WENT SO FAR AS TO TIE BERENGER TO THE CIA. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE CROWD, THE PM REFERRED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE LABOR PARTY (PT) MANIFESTO PUBLISHED THE DAY BEFORE. IN IT THE PT, LIKE MOST OF THE OTHER PARTIES, CALLS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REPUBLIC TO BE RATIFIED BY A POPULAR REFERENDUM. IN ADDITION TO THE ALREADY ANNOUNCED PROPOSALS FOR FREE EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS AND FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR THE ELDERLY, THE PT MANIFESTO PROMISES A NATIONAL HEALTH SCHEME LIKE THAT OF BRITAIN. ANOTHER PROPOSAL IS THE GRANTING OF LAND ACQUISITION AND HOUSING CONSTRUCTION LOANS AT 100 PERCENT FOR PROSPECTIVE HOMEOWNERS. THE PT MANIFESTO DIRECTLY ATTACKS LABOR'S MAIN ADVERSARIES, THE MMM AND THE PMSD. THE MMM IS TAXED WITH INEXPERIENCE AND MAKING PLANS FOR THE ECONOMY THAT WOULD CREATE CHAOS. SHOULD THE MMM WIN THE ELECTIONS " COMMUNIST TOTALITARIANISM IN ALL ITS UGLINESS WOULD BE INSTALLED HERE AND IT WOULD SIGNIFY THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY FOREVER." AS FOR THE PMSD, THE PT MANIFESTO SAYS IT IS A ONE-MAN SHOW LED BY A "MERCURIAL" LEADER (DUVAL) WHO DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE WOULD DO IF HE CAME TO POWER. THE PMSD IS CRITICIZED FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PORT L 01103 151017Z

ITS SYMPATHIES FOR SOUTH AFRICA: "A VOTE FOR THE PMSD WOULD BE A VOTE IN FAVOR OF THE SEPARATION OF MAURITIUS NOT ONLY FROM ITS AFRICAN FRIENDS BUT ALSO FROM THE REST OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD."

3. AT THE MMM SUNDAY RALLY, BERENGER WARNED AGAINST BELIEVING POLLS (WHICH SHOW HIM FAILING TO WIN A SEAT). HE CALLED ON THE MMM MILITANTS TO REMAIN CALM AND PEACEFUL REGARDLESS

OF THE OUTCOME DECEMBER 20.

4. INTERNALLY THE MMM WAS HAVING SOME PROBLEMS WITH THE CONTROVERSIAL RAM PYNDIAH, WHO HAS APPARENTLY BEEN TRYING TO DOMINATE THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. AN INTERVIEW IN WEEK-END AND AN ARTICLE IN L'EXPRESS INDICATE THAT PYNDIAH HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE TURMOIL WITHIN THE PARTY. PYNDIAH TOLD THE PRESS QUITE OPENLY THAT HE WANTS TO PUSH THE PARTY IN A LEFTWARD DIRECTION IMMEDIATELY, AND THE REST OF THE MMM LEADERSHIP IS HESITATING BECAUSE IT FEARS A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE ELECTORATE. PYNDIAH CONFIRMED THAT HE IS AT ODDS WITH THE MMM CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND SAYS A "CABAL" IS WORKING AGAINST HIM. HE IS ALSO APPARENTLY BITTER THAT HE WAS NOT CHOSEN TO BE A SPEAKER ON THE MMM'S TV PROGRAMS. HE ANNOUNCED HE PLANS TO GO TO INDIA FOR THREE TO SIX MONTHS FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS EVEN IF HE IS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE ASSEMBLY. HE PREDICTED THE MMM WOULD WIN 40 SEATS. HE ALSO REVEALED THAT HALF OF THE MMM CANDIDATES WERE UNABLE TO COME UP WITH THE RS. 2,000 FOR THE CAMPAIGN THAT WAS REQUESTED FROM THEM BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE. PYNDIAH DENIED HE HAD THREATENED PAUL BERENGER WITH A GUN AND THAT HE IS CONSULTING A PSYCHIATRIST, AS THE ANTI-MMM PRESS HAS CHARGED. THE NEXT DAY LE MAURICIEN SAID PYNDIAH'S STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS HAVE CAUSED A "GRAVE CRISIS" IN THE MMM AND THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS MEETING TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO. PYNDIAH TOLD THE PRESS HIS DIFFERENCES WITH THE MMM LEADERSHIP ARE "PURELY IDEOLOGICAL" AND HE HAS NOTHING AGAINST THEM PERSONALLY. HE WANTS THE PARTY, ONCE IN POWER, TO MOVE FASTER WITH NATIONALIZATIONS BECAUSE ACCORDING TO HIM FOREIGN COUNTRIES WILL MOVE QUICKLY TO "DESTABILIZE" A MMM GOVERNMENT IN MAURITIUS, AS WAS DONE WITH CHILE.

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PAGE 04 PORT L 01103 151017Z

5. ON THE PMSD CAMPAIGN FRONT, THE PARTY'S FIRST TV BROADCAST WAS A VIRTUOSO PERFORMANCE BY DUVAL WHO SPOKE IN A WARM, RELAXED AND ARTICULATE CREOLE WITHOUT NOTES FOR 30 MINUTES. HE INTRODUCED SIX OF THE PARTY'S LEADING CANDIDATES, BUT DID ALL THE TALKING HIMSELF IN A CHARACTERISTICALLY EGOTISTICAL PERFORMANCE. HE CALLED ON THE PEOPLE TO REJECT COMMUNISM (THE MMM) AND CORRUPTION (THE IP) AND TO VOTE FOR A "LIBERAL MAURITIUS WITH A FREE ENTERPRISE ECONOMIC SYSTEM." DUVAL'S APPROACH WAS SO PERSONALIZED THAT HE TENDED TO CONFIRM THE IMAGE OF THE PMSD AS A ONE-MAN INSTITUTION. HE EARLIER TRIED TO DESPEL DOUBTS OVER WHETHER AN AGREEMENT EXISTS BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND THE IP, WHEN IN AN INTERVIEW IN WEEK-END HE STRONGLY CRITICIZED THE LABOR PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL BY SAYING THAT JAGATSINGH HAS HAD AN "EVIL INFLUENCE ON MAURITIAN POLITICS;"

(THE MMM CHARGES THAT DUVAL HAS MADE A SECRET AGREEMENT WITH THE BOOLELL-JAGATSINGH WING OF THE LABOR PARTY.)

6. A FIGHT FLARED UP BETWEEN THE PMSD AND THE UDM (WHICH IS MADE UP OF DEFECTORS FROM THE PMSD) WHEN LE POPULAIRE, THE PMSD ORGAN, REPORTED THAT THE LEADERS OF THE MMM AND THE UDM REACHED AN AGREEMENT WHEREBY THE MMM WILL WITHDRAW ONE CANDIDATE IN EACH OF THE THREE DISTRICTS (QUATRE BORNES, BEAU BASSIN AND PORT LOUIS NO. 1) AND THROW THEIR SUPPORT TO THE UDM'S LEADERS (LESAGE, RIVET AND OLLIVRY) RUNNING IN THOSE DISTRICTS. IN RETURN, ACCORDING TO THE PAPER, THE UDM WILL WITHDRAW ALL OF ITS OTHER CANDIDATES AND THROW ITS SUPPORT TO THE MMM. UDM LEADER OLLIVRY LATER STRONGLY DENIED THERE IS ANY SUCH AGREEMENT. DUVAL PUBLISHED A LETTER INVITING THE OTHER UDM CANDIDATES TO THROW THEIR SUPPORT TO THE PMSD IN VIEW OF THIS ALLIANCE WITH THE "COMMUNISTS" BY THEIR PARTY LEADERS.

7. IN OTHER DEVELOPMENTS, THE MAURITIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION DECIDED THAT THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY ALONE WILL BROADCAST ON ELECTION EVE, DECEMBER 19, A DECISION THAT HAS BEEN STRONGLY PROTESTED BY THE MMM. OVER THE WEEKEND THE POLICE BEGAN STOPPING AND SEARCHING CARS FOR WEAPONS IN THE EVENINGS IN THE HOPE OF REDUCING VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, THERE WERE A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE, NONE MAJOR, BETWEEN PARTISANS OF THE MMM, IP AND PMSD WHO CROSSED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 05 PORT L 01103 151017Z

EACH OTHER'S PATHS GOING TO AND RETURNING FROM THE LARGE NATIONAL RALLIES ON SUNDAY. THE OFFICES OF THE PMSD'S LE POPULAIRE WERE STONED BY MMM PARTISANS.
KEELEY

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